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LETTER DATED 4 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the final communiqué adopted by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its twenty-third special session, which was held in Abu Dhabi on 4 March 1999.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammad J. SAMHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Final communiqué adopted by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its twenty-third special session, held in Abu Dhabi on 4 March 1999

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held its twenty-third special session on 4 March 1999 in Abu Dhabi under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Rashid Bin Abdullah al-Nuaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and current Chairman of the Ministerial Council. The meeting was attended by:

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates;

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain;

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia;

His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs of Oman;

His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar; and

His Excellency Mr. Abdul Aziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait.

His Excellency Mr. Jamil Ibrahim al-Hegelan, GCC Secretary-General, also participated in the meeting.

The Ministerial Council considered the dangerous and delicate situation in the Arabian Gulf region created by the military exercises being conducted by the naval and air forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates between the Strait of Hormuz and the occupied island of Abu Musa, which belongs to the United Arab Emirates. These exercises, which began on 27 February 1999, are being carried out in flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates, and they pose a serious threat to security and stability in the region and are endangering intraregional and international shipping in the Arabian Gulf.

The Ministerial Council recalls the decision of the GCC Supreme Council at its nineteenth session, held in Abu Dhabi in December 1998, affirming that the GCC member States reject the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, and further affirming the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over those islands as an integral part of the State.

The Ministerial Council condemns the provocative Iranian military exercises being conducted on the three occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates and in its territorial waters. It urges Iran to desist forthwith from acts of provocation that pose a threat to security and stability in the Arabian Gulf, represent a source of deep concern and do nothing to promote confidence-building, since they are in violation of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates and constitute an attempt on the part of Iran to perpetuate its occupation of the islands.

The Ministerial Council conveys its outright rejection of Iran's continued occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates and, reaffirming the full sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the islands, it renews its call to the Iranian Government to end the occupation.

The Ministerial Council notes the firm desire of the United Arab Emirates, the GCC member States and the Arab States for rapprochement, for the elimination of obstacles to better relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and for genuine initiatives to bring about good relations based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, regard for common interests, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, the renunciation of the threat or use of force and the settlement of disputes through dialogue and other peaceful means. Iran has, however, met such initiatives with stepped-up measures to perpetuate the occupation and with further flagrant violation of the territorial sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates. It has gone so far as to transform the three islands into military zones and repeatedly to hold military exercises by its naval and air forces in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, and this represents a source of deep concern for the GCC member States and betrays a contradiction between Iranian words and Iranian deeds.

The Ministerial Council renews its affirmation that it is important for the Islamic Republic of Iran to translate its declared desire, under President Mohammad Khatami, to improve its relations with the GCC member States into practical and concrete measures, in both word and deed. It should do this by responding candidly to the earnest and sincere calls issued by His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, by the GCC member States, by the Damascus Declaration countries, by the League of Arab States, by regional and international organizations and by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a peaceful settlement to the dispute over the three islands, in accordance with the relevant conventions and covenants and the norms of international law, to be reached through direct negotiations or by referral to the International Court of Justice as the instrument for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. This is the way to build confidence and strengthen security and stability in the region.

The Ministerial Council affirms that the strengthening and diversification of cooperation between the GCC member States and the Islamic Republic of Iran requires that Iran should endeavour to build confidence and to resolve existing problems between the two sides on the basis of the principles endorsed by the GCC Supreme Council with regard to relations between the GCC member States and Iran and in accordance with established international norms and international custom.

The Ministerial Council decides to request the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, as Chairman of its current session, and the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council to approach sympathetic Arab and non-Arab States as well as regional and international groupings and organizations with a view to calling attention to the dangerous situation created in the region by Iran's armaments programmes, and particularly its missile programmes and programmes for weapons of mass destruction, given that these programmes exceed Iran's legitimate defence needs, represent a source of deep concern for the GCC member States and pose a threat to regional security and stability in the Arabian Gulf.

The Secretary-General will submit to the Ministerial Council at its next session a comprehensive report on Iranian violations and on the military exercises.